



News Release

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Local Police Target Dangerous Bicyclists and Drivers *UDOH Joins in “Sting” Operation to Reduce Bike Deaths*

(Draper & West Valley City, UT) – In the world of bikes vs. cars, bikes nearly always lose. Each year some 870 Utah cyclists are hurt and six are killed in crashes with motor vehicles.

“A big part of the problem is many people don’t even know basic bike safety rules,” said Utah Department of Health (UDOH) injury prevention specialist Theron Jeppson. “But there are laws that tell motorists and bicyclists how to share the road,” he said. “For example, drivers should leave at least three feet of clearance when passing a bicycle and bicyclists should ride to the right when conditions safely allow it.”

For the second year in a row, Utah police officers will hit the streets in Bicycle Safety Enforcement Actions (BSEAs), looking for motorists and cyclists who break those laws. Last year, officers in five jurisdictions issued 627 warnings and citations for the following violations:

Motorists

- Failure to yield right-of-way
- Failure to stop at stop signs/lights
- Illegal turns
- Speeding
- Improper passing

Bicyclists

- Failure to yield right-of-way
- Failure to stop at stop signs/lights
- Illegal turns
- Riding against the flow of traffic

“The great thing about the BSEA is it’s an educational tool,” said Cyndi Bemis, education coordinator for the UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention Program (VIPP). “Everyone who is pulled over gets a Share the Road guide that outlines state laws and offers safety tips.”

In Utah, more males ride bikes and are three times more likely to be hit by a car. Children are also at high risk. From 1995-2004:

- Utah’s bicyclist death rate was 11th highest in the nation
- 63 cyclists were killed
- 8,717 bicyclists were hit by motor vehicles
- 3,748 victims were children ages 5-14
- Treatment of bike crash injuries totaled \$29 million

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One of the overriding risks to cyclists is that they don't understand they are supposed to act like motorists. Also at issue are motorists who don't respect bicyclists' right to use the road. In fact, bikes are by law the same as a motor vehicle, with the same rights and responsibilities.

"Bicyclist responsibilities include riding on the right side of the road with traffic," said Jeppson. "Riding against traffic is a recipe for trouble," he said. "Cyclists must also yield right-of-way, use hand signals to turn and obey all traffic signs and lane markings."

Bicyclists' rights are equally important. "Anyone on a bike has a right to be on the street, as long as that person is riding with traffic and obeying the law," said Bemis.

Beginning in July, Draper and West Valley City police officers will patrol high-traffic areas where bike crashes have occurred. Undercover "decoy" officers will ride bikes in traffic while fellow officers watch for drivers who are speeding, crowding cyclists off the edge of the road, and failing to yield at stop signs and red lights.

"Cyclists are just as guilty of breaking the law," said Officer Eric Braegger of Draper P.D. "They run red lights, change course without warning and, most dangerous of all, ride against traffic," he said. "This is our chance to teach everyone how to be safer by obeying the law."

The media are invited to ride along on an enforcement action. BSEAs will be conducted in West Valley City on July 6, 11, 13 and 18 and in Draper on July 12 and 29. Please contact WVC Police Lt. Dale Brophy at 801-232-0505 or Draper Police Officer Eric Braegger at 801-831-6432 for details.

The BSEA project is made possible through a National Highway Traffic Safety Grant awarded to the UDOH and Utah Department of Public Safety, Highway Safety program in 2005. For more information, call Cyndi Bemis at 801-538-6348 or 801-550-4228. For details on the BSEA and general bicycle safety visit www.health.utah.gov/vipp/bicycleSafety/overview.html.

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